The Built Environment and Human Wellbeing

and Everything in Between

What's the Problem?

The built environment is highly connected and provides significant value to our communities. Yet the traditional mechanisms to value the worth of built assets typically consider those assets in isolation: neither considering the community they serve nor the connections and interrelationships that exist within the built environment itself.

Heritage buildings can, for example, provide many services to community, including cultural value, tourism, community meeting spaces, etc. Yet, when we assess the value of a repair, we consider these values in an ad-hoc fashion, or not at all.

If we can **better understand, map, and value the community services built infrastructure provides**, then we can have more robust and objective conversations about the extent of community investment in built infrastructure, and trade-offs inherent to alternative development, investment and policy options.

What are we doing about it?

This research aims to **apply the idea of "ecosystem services" to the built environment** to develop a framework that will enhance our ability to map, understand and assess the built environment and its relationships to human well-being.

The research being conducted consists of a literature review of ecosystem services and related decision support framework such as Cost Benefit Analysis, and expert interviews and a focus group to determine:

(1) what services and functions that the built environment provides are considered important in different areas of expertise
(2) how a framework such as we are proposing could help to enhance conversations between policy makers, scientists and other experts, and
(3) how such a framework could enhance and provide a critiquing mechanism for decision support tools such as land use and economic models.

What Opportunities does this Research Create?

We think the framework being developed has the potential to:

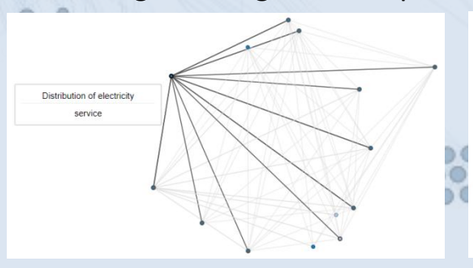
Enhance our ability to **assess the impact of natural hazard events** comprehensively on sense of place, attractiveness of our cities to businesses, community well-being, economic activity, and safety, among many more social outcomes.

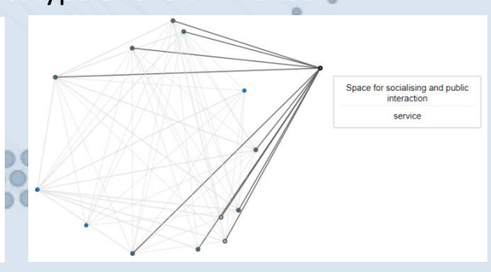
Facilitate conversations between stakeholders with different expertise in the built environment; e.g. social policy, commercial building operators and developers, engineers, architects, economists, and heritage specialists.

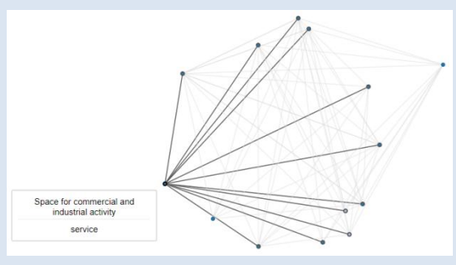
Provide a **basis for developing decision support tools** and assessing existing modelling tools to identify the relationships these models incorporate and the ones they do not.

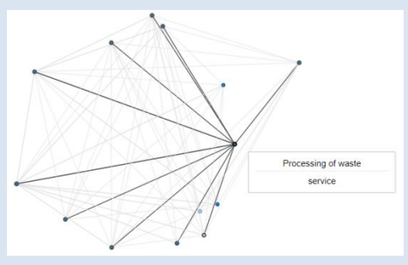
And We're Developing a Nifty Tool!

One of the outputs of the project will be an **online interactive tool** for presenting the framework and enabling users to explore the framework and the relationships between the built environment, the services it provides and human well-being. The following are images from a prototype of the online tool.









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